

Information sheet for those attending Quasi-Judicial Public Hearings of the Pullman Planning Commission

For many issues, the Planning Commission is required by law to hold what are known as “quasi-judicial” public hearings. Quasi-judicial hearings involve the legal rights of specific parties and usually pertain to one particular parcel of land. In these cases, the Commission acts like a judge by determining the legal rights, duties, and privileges of specific parties in the hearing (hence the term “quasi-judicial”). The fundamental purpose of a quasi-judicial hearing is to provide the affected parties due process. Due process requires notice of the proceedings and an opportunity to be heard. This information sheet has been prepared to help you understand what the Commission does during the course of these public hearings and why it follows these procedures. (Please note that the provision of a hearing notice to affected parties, while part of the entire process, is not included in the information below because this document addresses only those steps that occur during the public hearing itself.)

PUBLIC HEARING PROCEDURES

WHY IS THIS DONE?

1. The Planning Commission chair opens the hearing.

This step advises everyone present that the hearing is starting.

2. The chair reads the rules of procedure for the hearing. Procedures require administering an oath or a

The chair can administer the oath or affirmation to all speakers while reading the rules of procedure or in

The rules of procedure provide the organizational structure for the hearing process.

The oath is administered to ensure the integrity of the evidence provided.

3. The chair asks questions to disclose any “Appearance of Fairness” issues for Commission members

The “Appearance of Fairness” questions are asked so that any Commission member may disclose confl

4. Planning staff presents its “staff report,” in which it summarizes background information and recommen

The staff report furnishes information to the public and Commission to assist in all participants’ understa

5. The chair requests public testimony. The applicant and other proponents are called first, followed

Accepting comment from affected parties is a key component of the hearing process.

Time limits are imposed to promote an efficient hearing and to facilitate the presentation of well-organize

6. The Commission members discuss the merits of the case. Often the Commission asks more questio

The Commission seeks consensus during this stage of the hearing so that it can proceed to making a final decision.

7. The Commission members formulate a written record of their decision called a “resolution.” First, the Commission members discuss the case and the evidence presented. They then vote on the resolution. The resolution is a written statement of the Commission’s decision and the reasons for the decision.

The Commission must ensure that it has appropriate documentation citing not just its decision, but also the evidence and the reasons for the decision.